



U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service

Advance Planning

Environmental Streamlining for Transportation Projects

The Challenge

Passage of the \$203 billion “Transportation Equity Act for the 21st Century” (TEA-21) on June 9, 1998, provided a significant boost for upgrading and improving the Nation’s transportation infrastructure through the year 2003. Section 1309 of TEA-21 provides for “environmental streamlining” measures involving many Federal agencies, particularly the Fish and Wildlife Service. Section 1309 requires the development of an interagency Memorandum of Understanding and a National Action Plan identifying specific environmental streamlining measures. The MOU and Actions Plan are to be implemented by the U.S. Department of Transportation and resource agencies such as the FWS.

What are our opportunities?

As a result of TEA-21, an increase of nearly 40 percent in the number of



The FWS is working early-on with the Washington State DOT to develop a preferred alternative to State Road 104 that reduces traffic congestion and adverse impacts to federally-listed species and wetlands.
USFWS photo

transportation projects has occurred, placing increased demands on fish and wildlife resources and their habitats. Many State DOTs have expressed the need to expedite consultations and environmental reviews in order to meet the increased work load. As a result,

the Service estimates that its consultation and review work load at the field office level has increased nearly twofold for transportation projects, in spite of almost no increases in Service funds to accommodate the State DOT requests. There is an urgent need to build strong partnerships between Service field offices and State DOTs to meet this expanded workload. These partnerships must promote environmental streamlining and



Under TEA-21, joint partnerships between State DOTs and the Service can result in features such as wildlife crossings on both new and existing roads. FHWA photo

- Fish and wildlife issues can more easily be resolved when cooperation occurs early in the planning and scoping stages
- Agreements between the FWS and State DOTs provide additional personnel committed to solving transportation issues early in the planning stage, while conserving fish and wildlife.
- Building strong partnerships between the Service and State DOTs enhances development of “win-win” projects.

protect and enhance fish and wildlife resources.

What are our authorities?

The Fish and Wildlife Service consults with Federal transportation agencies, applicants, and State DOTs, to provide for the conservation, protection, and enhancement of fish and wildlife and their habitats that would be impacted by proposed transportation projects. Our authorities include the National Environmental Policy Act, Fish and Wildlife Coordination Act, Endangered Species Act, Transportation Act, Section 1309 of TEA-21, and others.

What are our accomplishments?

- The Service issued guidance in March 1999 encouraging its field offices to develop agreements with State DOTs focusing on early and involved coordination to resolve fish and wildlife issues.
- In July 1999, the Department of the Interior signed an inter-agency Memorandum of Understanding with the Department of Transportation in which both agencies agreed to implement long-term environmental streamlining procedures.
- In June 2000, the Service issued draft guidance promoting streamlined programmatic section 7

consultations for transportation projects while still protecting listed species and their critical habitats.

- Under TEA-21, the Service has signed 13 agreements with State DOTs, providing 14 new Service positions that specifically focus on early coordination on transportation projects to better resolve fish and wildlife issues
- Environmental streamlining results in projects that are being implemented faster while protecting and enhancing fish and wildlife resources.

Summary

When the opportunity exists, Service field offices and State DOTs can work together effectively to develop partnerships that meet transportation needs while protecting and enhancing fish and wildlife resources.

Strong partnerships benefit both the Service and State DOTs in meeting our respective resource conservation and transportation challenges.



Lupine planted along a reconstructed county road in the Menominee Indian Reservation in Wisconsin during construction for conservation of the endangered Karner blue butterfly. USFWS photo



John L. Baker (left), District Engineer, Pennsylvania Department of Transportation, and Dr. Martin Huebner from Hiram College are assisting the FWS in the relocation of federally-listed endangered mussels prior to a proposed bridge reconstruction project over the Allegheny River. USFWS photo

For more information about Environmental Streamlining for Transportation Projects, contact:

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